

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

abion



JL.

July 1st 1971.

ALBION is a journal of board wargaming, Diplomacy and allied interests. It is published on the first day of each month (subject to possible minor variations) at 10p per issue, plus appropriate postage costs. Postal Diplomacy games are reported in COURIER, the section of ALBION created for that purpose. Applications for places in Diplomacy games should be sent to the editor - Don Turnbull, 6 St. George's Avenue, Timperley, Cheshire; the supply of games is usually a function of the demand. Players awaiting a game are expected to subscribe to ALBION until the game starts; when involved in a game, players receive both ALBION and COURIER free, having paid the game fee, until either they are eliminated or the game ends; they pay postage costs throughout.

ALBION is a member of the NFFF Games Bureau Diplomacy Division.

Diplomacy is a game manufactured and marketed by Games Research Inc., 48 Wareham Street, Boston, Mass. 02118, U.S.A. It can be obtained from various stockists in England - see the list in this issue, to which further contributions are invited. Please mention ALBION when writing to a stockist, even at the risk of giving him severe apoplexy.

Contributions to ALBION are welcome; please submit them as far in advance of publication date as possible.

The editor does not necessarily share the views of contributors as expressed in letters or articles; indeed, it has been said that the editor holds no views at all on anything whatsoever. His comments can thus be safely ignored, or read with a mixture of incredulity, alarm and (please) pity.

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At the time of typing this page, I'm not sure who will be doing the art-work for this issue. It could be any one or two of George Forster, Pam Palmer, Ian Livingstone or Roger Emerson. Whoever it is, our thanks.

Ye Second Birthday Editorial.

'Yes, dear reader, this is ALBION, a Diplomacy magazine of no distinction whatever. Note particularly the miscellany of rubbish which pervades this, the first issue.'

The above appeared two years ago, almost to the day. Three weeks later, there was published the following amazing indictment of the reading habits and supreme financial disregard of the ALBION-reading public:

'In your hands, dear reader, you hold a document unique in the world of magazine publishing - the indisputable evidence that ALBION has survived into a second issue. And this despite the almost total lack of acclaim received by the first issue. How long this terrible state of affairs will continue is anyone's guess.'

Well, you can't say you weren't warned. Without a care for the future, you have deliberately allowed ALBION to continue for two years to make its awful impact on the world, unabated. As a self-imposed punishment, I hope you continue to read the thing.

The really remarkable thing about ALBION is the amazing number of people it continues to hoodwink. Nearly 100 subscribers now, all persisting in sending their cash to the Editorial Permanence In Drunkenness Fund. A growth-rate of approximately one new subscriber per week! How you can all tolerate this I cannot understand; however, as they say across the frontier into Yorkshire - 'There's nowt so queer as folk' (being married to a Yorkshirewoman, I subscribe whole-heartedly to this view).

When any organisation (in this case, a disorganisation) celebrates a birthday, it usually reflects on the past and ponders on the future. Well, reflection on the past is all very well, but you have had to suffer enough already by virtue of receiving previous issues without my adding to your pain by reminding you of them. As for the future; well, the only world-shattering announcement I can come up with is - ALBION will continue just as it is at present. Hard to bear, maybe, but 'into each life a little sadness falls'.

This issue. First, you will probably find at least two covers, one doing service as a back cover. I tried to commission a number of artists for this cover, and suddenly found that at least two of them had bitten the bait; so you must see both productions. The two likely candidates are Ian Livingstone and Pam Palmer. Ian will already be known to Abstraction players as the Abstract Englishman who Lost a Fleet off the Clyde; Pam, who suffers the supreme misfortune of teaching at the same establishment as myself, is *****, rather *****, quite a bit ***** and at times \$@%&**!(@#! Don't let my wife read this, anyone.....

Elsewhere in this issue you will read (or avoid, if you have any sense) the usual array of articles; luckily for you, there's not much by me. One novel item is the announcement of the chess tournament, the brain-child of Richard Redd, now out of the Israeli army and glad of it. Other articles are mainly by new writers - Charles Appleby, Colin Hemming etc. - whose contributions are most welcome. And - here's a promise - no corny jokes.

Seriously (for a change) I confess it is most heartening to find that people continue to be enthusiastic about ALBION, despite its obvious shortcomings. I am convinced that the rise in the number of subscribers is due more to the enthusiasm which the subscribers generate and broadcast than to any particular quality of the magazine, although such quality is on the increase due to the efforts of those who write articles. My sincere thanks to you all.

Modular Blitzkreig.

by Charles Appleby.

With acknowledgements to Pat Wingfield for his help as an opponent and for the subsequent discussion in which these ideas were formulated.

**** Editor's note. The Avalon Hill game Blitzkreig was first marketed in October 1965, and was an immediate 'hit' with wargamers. The game is based on an imaginary scenario, and pits two armies, of similar make-up, against each other across a large board, having five minor countries between the two major powers.

In common with virtually every other Avalon Hill game, Blitz attracted its share of designers who wanted to amend this and that rule, or to add this and that additional aspect to the game. Many of these notions (some of which were printed in the AH General) were soundly based, but, as with all amendments to an existing game, didn't quite seem to merge into the original concept, and employment of these extras led to a lack of integration of the game as a whole.

However S&T did the job properly. In issue 19 (November 1969) there appeared a complete set of new rules for the game, entitled the BLITZKREIG MODULE SYSTEM, and it is to this system that Charles refers in his article.

Perhaps a few words of description of the system would assist those readers who haven't seen S&T issue 19, and those who haven't seen the original Blitzkreig.

The re-design of Blitzkreig consists of 18 new modules, each module either amending or replacing a particular rule or set of rules in the original design. Some of the modules require new game components, unit counters, results tables etc., all of which were included in S&T 19. There is no obligation on the part of the player to use all the modules; inexperienced players can use two or three new modules for the first game, adding one or two more for each successive game until the desired mixture is obtained.

In fact, those who don't own a copy of Blitzkreig can easily use the module system for any similar game, or even for a self-designed game.

The system has never been reviewed in ALBION, for the simple reason that time has never permitted us to examine everything in the system. What we have seen, we like. Enough of me - now over to Charles. djt ****

Wargame design, for the serious gamer's purpose, consists basically of improvement upon an existing system of battle. It is no longer worthwhile producing a game which uses very similar rules and concepts to an existing one, merely set in a different scenario. Unless the game is to fall by the wayside, one must use original ideas that will naturally change the focus

of board games if good enough. The main source of new ideas, obviously, is the Strategy and Tactics organisation, which has the experienced personnel and the facilities to produce large numbers of good games, with no lack of originality.

In this context, examination and criticism of existing standard games is essential, firstly as a source of the new ideas that they demonstrate, and secondly for improvements they lead you to think of. I notice that Modular Blitzkreig has been mentioned on several occasions, but I do not know if ALBION has done a review of it. However, even if it has, this game is still worth a lot of attention.

As far as the rules go it is by far the most complicated I have seen, and the choice and complexity of alternative forces and possible manoeuvres available is quite unbelievable. Naturally the Avalon Hill "1914" springs to mind at the mention of complexity, but the sheer scope of Modular Blitzkreig makes it harder to play; it's not so much the rules of "1914" that makes the game so difficult as the tortuous boredom of playing it.

If you do not know already, the rules for Modular Blitzkreig cover virtually every aspect of land, air and sea warfare relating to overland or sea invasions. The thought and effort put into the game by its designers (Jim Dunnigan and Red Simonsen) is really impressive, because for a game of this level of involvement the rules are surprisingly clear and well integrated. In fact the 21 sides of rules and charts must be some of the most comprehensive, concise rules ever written - full marks to S&T again!

However, what is most fascinating about the whole game from a game design point of view is the shadow it casts over the present level of mechanics for standard Avalon Hill games. This in fact is what Modular Blitzkreig is - not a highly sophisticated radically new departure in gaming, but a logical extrapolation of an Avalon Hill-type game to gargantuan proportions.

Several fundamental errors with earlier AH board games become apparent:

1. No account is taken of the time a unit actually takes to fight a battle. For example an armour unit, with a movement factor of 6, could make a full move and not attack at all, or fight a full-scale battle at the end of it.
2. Using impulse movement a unit can creep right through a point defence and cut off supplies for enemy units. This highlights the lack of simultaneity in board games - something that the table-top figure gamers (or Diplomacy players, for that matter) can solve satisfactorily with written moves, because of the smaller number of basic units involved. This comment obviously only applies to face-to-face battles, which I think is perhaps the more usual mode of play. I wonder if anyone has tried simultaneous movement by post?

**** A few attempts have been made; I have been involved in a simultaneous-movement 1914 game, using all the rules and a good monitor (John Robertson) in the middle trying to sort out the chaos. Jutland is played using simultaneous movement in postal games, and I know that at one time there was a proposal to run a large Battle of the Bulge variant, using simultaneous movement and teams of players, although I think this failed to get off the ground. Generally speaking, if there is a viable alternative which allows for smoother play mechanics, this is preferable in postal games for the sake of simplicity. djt ****

3. An interesting effect that only occurs pronouncedly with powerful forces, especially with strong air power, is that after one's own turn victory seems close at hand; on the other hand, after the opponent's turn defeat seems imminent. This is the same effect as 2 above, but in particular it pin-points the almost complete lack of reaction by the defender to any attacking move.
4. Problems on points systems also arise. These certainly can be solved eventually, in almost every case, but 'do-it-yourself' designers are clearly going to have difficulty resolving this aspect - at least I have always found this. Experience is a great help here.
However Modular Blitzkreig seems to have been undermined in an attempt to field a Chinese-type horde army. What this means in practice is that one can produce 12 combat points worth of defence factors for the price of one strategic bomber point. The effect is clearer when one considers that you need at least six SAC bomber points to give even a player with a loaded die a chance of destroying his target; and the production points cost does not, of course, include escort fighters, or the fact that SAC bombers are far too expensive to attack any target even lightly defended with flak.
In my opinion the horde infantry is a dead loss. It is ridiculous for players with advanced modern armies needing to - and being allowed to - resort to such forces in order to keep hold of the territory they can capture. Nevertheless it makes an interesting game to oppose a totally horde army with an advanced strategic army as the rules suggest.
5. This leads us on to Modular Blitzkreig's other failing, that of a bad OOB system - a point related to 4. One is free to choose from seven different types of army, on the points system some being worth double that of others and clearly stronger as well - a dubious points system. Even at the start, though, the forces are not by any means as equal as one could envisage possible. After two or three turns production, the effect of additional advanced weapons increases over its starting effect, if anything.
Thus it would be useful if the points system was good enough to enable a player to choose an army and link this choice to subsequent production capabilities, as is the method for table-top army selection.
6. Common problems arise concerning zones of control of units cutting rail lines - do they extend through defending units standing on the rail line or not? Also, do task forces (naval units) having bombardment capabilities also have a zone of control extending to land squares?

To conclude, Modular Blitzkreig in my opinion marks the end of a generation of games. A game of this size must, I think, utilise simultaneous movement, using identical sets of mapboards for face-to-face play. Orders can easily be written on the boards themselves, the rules incorporating a defender's reaction capability.

The fact that this is not the 'ultimate wargame', as one might expect when trying to learn the rules, certainly does not invalidate all other simpler games with the same mechanics, or even inhibit further design of the simpler types. It merely emphasises the errors in approximations necessary to formulate a new game - and approximations are the whole process of producing the realism of a simulation game.

Don't let's allow this viewpoint to dishearten or demoralise us, though. The

game is well worth getting (by purchasing S&T issue 19, containing the modifications to AH Blitzkreig) purely for reference for any would-be designer. As for playing the game - postal play is perhaps in many ways advantageous, I imagine. But get it! It really is fantastic!

Charles Appleby.

**** S&T 19 is available as a back issue, and can be ordered from the Poultron Press U.K. Agency, at my address. Nothing like the opportunity for pushing one's own particular trade.....
My thanks to Charles for his article; I hope we can persuade him to write more for ALBION in future. djt ****

ALBION Game Review Number 16.

TRIREME.

Marketed by Decalset, Dept. D2, 16 Davenport Road, Sidcup, Kent.

Price: £2.60 plus postage (postage is 32p extra in the UK).

Designer: E.P.Smith.

Enclosed with this issue of ALBION is a copy of the Decalset advertising brochure for the interest of readers, who can use the back of the brochure as an order form if they decide to get the game. Please mention that you have read the ALBION review when you order.

Introductory.

Decalset have made TRIREME their first venture into the commercial board wargame market. Prior to this they sold sets of rules for table-top games (you will see The Wars Of The Roses etc. in the brochure). TRIREME itself started life as a set of rules for use with table-top models, the models being also available from Decalset.

The game can therefore be regarded as something of an experiment in marketing. It seems to have been left to the smaller English companies to investigate something the larger companies should have looked into a long time ago - whether there are as many frustrated board wargamers lurking up and down the country, out of contact with any main group, as we suspect. Cranwell House sales of SCHWEINFURT (reviewed in issue 29, and mentioned later this issue) seem to confirm that there is a much larger potential market in this country for board wargames than Waddingtons etc. seem to appreciate, and it will be interesting to hear if Decalset have come to the same conclusions from their sales of TRIREME.

Presentation.

TRIREME is without doubt the best game, presentation-wise, that we have ever come across. It ranks equally with the best Waddingtons or Avalon Hill product which, considering the price, makes it a very good buy on these grounds alone.

It is perhaps worth outlining what you get for your money. Two boards, laminated with clear plastic surfacing, and marked in a staggered-square grid layout similar to that used in the Gamescience Battle of Britain. You can obtain extra boards to increase the scope of the action. Movement cards, again plastic laminated so that they can be written on with a chinagraph pencil, two of which are supplied. Ship record cards, again plastic laminated.

Let it be said at this point - when the Gamescience Battle of Britain first appeared, we thought that the idea of using erasable chinagraph markings on record cards was a good one; however our ideas were rudely shattered when the surface of the Battle of Britain cards started to rub off after some use. This is not the case with the TRIREME cards, at least up to the present time. They have been given considerable use, both myself and Malcolm writing lightly, and Margaret writing as though she were chiselling my epitaph on a gravestone for people to see for the next few centuries. In all cases the plastic surface has proved impervious to rough treatment, and are still as new.

More on what you get. Two 'average' dice (more on these later) and one normal die. Plastic triremes (10 each side) with identification letters to stick on. Stick-on wind indicator (this isn't mentioned at all in the rules, curiously enough - no doubt it is used in campaign games, when the triremes arrived at the scene of action with sails up; in this game they never employ sails during action) and rocks, reefs etc. which can be stuck on the boards at will before play commences.

Finally, the rule book. And what a magnificent rule book this is! Clearly printed with very few errors, assembled and spined in plastic, with an attractive cover design. A truly professional set of rules, and one which Avalon Hill and any other manufacturer could emulate to their advantage.

Ten out of ten to Decalset for the presentation. I can't see how it could be bettered, and how they have managed it at the price is quite beyond us.

The Rules.

Easy to understand, with one or two omissions and a few points capable of misinterpretation. As we said above, the rules are well produced and presented; at the back of the rulebook there is a summary of the sequence of play, the results tables etc., for use during a game. This is a valuable addition, which assists players until familiarity with the rules is complete.

Each step in the play is described in detail, with many diagrams showing examples of movement, ramming etc. At first sight the rules appear to be quite long; however this is more due to the fine detail with which each rule is dealt than to any inherent complexity. In fact the game ranks on about a par with Afrika Korps as far as complexity is concerned - perhaps even simpler - and we would thus rate it as a 'simple' game to understand. You will read in the advertising brochure that this 'is not a game for children'; well, if fourteen-year-olds can play some of the AH games, as AH say they can, then they can certainly manage TRIREME, and get a lot of fun out of it.

There are a few optional rules which the book recommends players to omit for the first few games. However there are so few optionals, and they are so simple, that experienced players should be able to include every rule right from the start. Perhaps Decalset erred slightly on the cautious side here, although of course that's better than the other way. We do, however, go along with the recommendation that players use only two or three triremes in the first game; using too many ships could make the game appear rather unwieldy in its mechanics, which would be an unfair comment. However to use too many ships initially doesn't permit players to get familiar with the play mechanics before they find themselves ramming their own ships and killing their own men; some Greeks may have been stupid, but none quite so stupid as the crew of my trireme B in the first game, which sank my trireme C with all hands, by mistake. Use two or three, I warn you!

There are one or two unclear points in the rules which could be mentioned here.

1. As already stated, the game contains a 'wind indicator', but the use of it isn't mentioned in the rules.
2. The question of multiple rams isn't mentioned. In the first game, I rammed bow-to-bow with an enemy ship, then rammed into the bows again with another ship. All in the same turn, which I confess was rather careless of me. My opponent (my wife Margaret in that particular instance) told me that, since there was chaos in the water ahead of my second trireme, it stood just as good a chance of ramming its ally as its enemy. Needless to say, I rolled the die (the preservation of marital equilibrium brings out the best in us all) and found that I had rammed my own ship.....
Confusion in this respect only arises when one trireme rams symmetrically two others that have either just rammed or are grappled together. We would be interested to hear comments from the designer on this. To my own mind, the crew of a trireme should be sober enough to avoid hitting their own mates, but then I don't know much about the standards of seamanship in those days.
3. If steering is lost, usually by losing all the oars on one side and having no rudder to correct, then an optional rule allows the transfer of oar sections from one side to the other (a trireme can steer even when it has no rudders so long as there are men wielding oars on both sides). If the optional rule isn't used, however, what happens to the ship? We presume it either goes round in circles, impelled by the oars on one side, or grinds to a permanent halt. A trireme turning permanent circles could cause even more chaos in a fleet than could incompetent orders.

Aside from these points, and one or two obvious misprints, we found the rules very clear.

The play.

It should be made clear right from the start that TRIREME is not a board-game, in the normally accepted sense of the word as used among players familiar with Avalon Hill games. I doubt if the board is necessary for play, movement being accomplished by measurement, and I suspect the rules started out as the basis for a table-top game, only being adapted for board play when it was decided to try a commercial version. The fact that the game is almost completely table-top in character should be remembered when reading the comments that follow.

It is relatively easy to get used to the play procedure, and once this has been done the play is virtually continuous, with only brief pauses for writing orders etc. Movement is simultaneous and a simple order code is given which allows players to write orders in a very short space of time.

Having gained familiarity with the procedure, play is fast-moving and interesting. The length of a game depends on the number of triremes in use - we would guess that the maximum game time would be 3-3½ hours even with ten triremes on each side, this figure reducing to perhaps 1 hour with three triremes each. The set-up time is virtually nil.

One minor nuisance - the boards have a habit of drifting apart. Plastic clips, such as those supplied with Kriegspiel or PanzerBlitz, can be used to keep the boards in position.

The largest game we tried had five triremes on each side; we didn't think it necessary to expand this number for the purposes of play-testing, since the problems remain the same. In fact, we are inclined to predict that play with a large number of triremes could become tedious. This is a difficult point to phrase, but let me try.

In Avalon Hill games, play tends to follow a standard overall pattern; first, the overall strategy is determined by each player, then, during the actual play turns, the players wrestle with tactical problems within that strategic framework, these problems varying considerably from turn to turn, although the overall objectives remain substantially the same. In TRIREME, however, there is no overall strategy; generally speaking, the problems that face a player are much the same each turn, there being no overall framework within which to adjudicate a particular situation in the light of the whole. Thus we would anticipate that to put twenty triremes on the board would be doing nothing more than playing two or three distinct games side by side, and this could be a tedious and confusing occupation.

This is, of course, a characteristic of a table-top wargame, which is almost entirely tactical in nature; we think that this characteristic is more marked in a table-top naval wargame - in a land game variety can be guaranteed by the changing terrain, the various different unit types etc. In a naval game of this nature, there are no changes in terrain, nor are there different unit types (although the advanced rules, available separately, allow for the use of other types of ship).

We would therefore advise players to use small forces only, even after they are completely familiar with the rules and procedure. Using large forces could lead to tedium, which would be an unfair comment on the game.

Bearing this peculiarity in mind, the play is most interesting and exciting, and we feel sure that wargamers are going to enjoy themselves with the game. This is also true of 'junior' players, who will find the game relatively easy to play and enjoy.

The 'average' dice.

Table-top players already know if these things, so can skip this bit. An average die is a normal cube, but without a 1 or a 6. Instead you get an extra 3 and an extra 4.

The reasons for the use of such dice are two-fold - first, they assist the play mechanics slightly, and second, they allow a different (only slightly different) range of probabilities to that given by a normal die. I assert with confidence that their use holds no fears for those who haven't come across them before. However I do wonder if they are necessary at all - the results obtained from one or two average dice can easily be obtained from one or two standard dice; there is a marginal improvement in the play mechanics, that's all, and you won't even notice the improvement.

I wonder why they are called 'average' dice, though? In fact the average throw from a normal die ($3\frac{1}{2}$ - work that one out if you can!) is the same as that of an 'average' die. Perhaps someone can enlighten me.

Conclusions.

TRIREME is a nice, clean, straightforward game, quite suitable for junior players as well as the more experienced. We wouldn't rate Afrika Korps as so easy, to give you a comparison. It is therefore a good introduction to wargaming, as well as being an entertaining game in its own right.

Intellectually (without being blasé) we think TRIREME somehow lacks the permanence of, say, Stalingrad. Board gamers tend to find their own particular favourites (Stalingrad is perhaps the most quoted as yet) to which they turn at constant intervals; we don't think TRIREME will become one of this category - in fact one could almost say that a player would be glad to turn to TRIREME for relaxation. However don't take this as a criticism of the game - there is plenty of room in a board wargamers repertoire for relaxing games, particularly now that we have the fearsome 1914, Anzio etc. to baffle our intellects.

We recommend you to purchase TRIREME. You will enjoy the play and get excellent value for your money, and it certainly deserves a place in your collection.

Decalset also produce a set of rules for Greek naval campaigns. These are to be used in conjunction with TRIREME (they supply the political and strategic element which the game lacks in isolation). We have these rules, and very interesting they are, but they require a larger number of players than occupy the Timperley Test Bed, at least at the last count. They have clearly been designed for face-to-face meetings of wargame clubs.

Suitability for postal play.

A grid could easily be concocted for the game to allow for postal play, and a monitor could be supplied. There is no apparent reason, therefore, why TRIREME should not be played by mail.

However we don't think it is a game which is particularly suitable for postal play (it was designed for face-to-face play, so that's hardly surprising). When you are taking on a postal game, with the delays between moves that this implies, you would be more likely to select a game with more 'meat' than this. The forte of TRIREME is across the table; the format makes it particularly suitable for table-top players who lack sufficient space to give vent to their hobby.

Don Turnbull. Malcolm Watson.

* * * * *

THE DESIGNER TALKS ABOUT SCHWEINFURT.

**** The Cranwell House game SCHWEINFURT was reviewed in the last issue of ALBION; in the review, as is our wont, we mentioned one or two points which required clarification. The designer, Tony Jones, has answered these points below and has added a few extra comments on the game. In each case the original comment, from the review (and abbreviated if necessary) will precede Tony's answer. djt ****

Me110 and Me410 counters lack the * symbol Agreed; Cranwell House has been notified of this.

We suggested that flak remains hidden until the end of the turn in which American planes first pass overhead I agree your ruling on this - sorry it was not made clear.

Sequence of play rule 1. Liberators move 5 Agreed - badly worded.

Movement rule 4 Yes, counter-attack is allowed without moving by US or German fighters. If they are attacked in the opposing player's turn they can, in their next turn, stay and attack back without moving.

We suggested that the 60° limitation on bombers' change of course should only apply after crossing hostile coast This is correct.

Combat rule 20 Correct - this rule refers to rule 19, not rule 18 as printed.

We thought the flak rules weren't entirely clear Flak in towns attacks each group individually prior to bombing. Flak on other squares only attacks the whole stack passing over it in the one turn. If two separate stacks fly over flak in one turn, each stack must undergo fire from the flak.

We wondered why the Americans were allowed hidden movement but not the Germans Hidden movement for American units is designed to simulate the fact that the units were not spotted until they got to radar range. I put in the rule to allow the American player to fox the German as to where he would cross the coast, trying to get the German out of position. In fact I refrained from hidden movement on the German side in order to ease play. There is nothing to stop players from trying hidden movement if they wish, but it does slow the game down - something I tried to avoid.

We thought that the rules concerning bomber movement required clarification Bombers must never move away from the target once they cross the coast. In fact from the US point of view this would be to their disadvantage because they would suffer more attacks from the Germans on their ways to the target. To get a good result the bombers must get to the targets quickly once they have crossed the coast.

We somehow got hold of the idea that flak doubles its effect against US fighters strafing an airfield. Where this came from we have no idea, since it isn't in the rules. I have a nasty suspicion that Watson invented the rule; he was the German player, after all..... Anyway, we printed the comment, and here is Tony's answer - no doubt a bit puzzled, as well it might be There is no reason why players could not make this a rule; however it does give the Germans an extra advantage and I feel that it would spoil the balance of the game (this is slightly in favour of the Germans anyway). I did not include an altitude rule for the sake of simplicity.

Like all games, players can fit their own rulings to suit their needs. This game was designed to give playability and action, without taking too long to play. Both Michael Nethercot and I will always be pleased to hear of ideas and new rules that players incorporate into the game. We felt that a first game should be fairly easy.

Tony Jones.

Here is another announcement re SCHWEINFURT. You will perhaps remember that the game, which normally costs £1.40, was available to ALBION readers at the specially reduced price of £1.20 while stocks of the initial print run lasted.

Well, you folks that dillied and dallied - the first run is now entirely sold out, so copies of the game are now only available for £1.40, whether you buy ALBION (to eat your chips from) or not. Sorry about that. However we are pleased to know that sales are going well. djt

Dear Don,

I'd like to shove my own two pennyworth into the PanzerBlitz discussion. One of the reasons I subscribe to magazines is to find out about games I don't have and am considering buying. I figure that, as most of the best games are expensive, I'd like an unbiased opinion on them before purchase rather than rely on the eulogies of the publisher's blurb. S&T, for instance, has saved me from wasting money on Kriegspiel and Luftwaffe, and thus has paid for itself for over two years. The remaining content of S&T magazine is a sheer bonus (and with games like Bastogne, TAC¹⁴ etc. - what a bonus!).

You see I find it very difficult to resist a new title and if you put me off just one 'bomb' (e.g. Hannibal) you have more than earned your keep. To sum up, then - for my vote, the more game reviews the better, and I'm looking forward to your comments on Strategy I and Kursk.

Best wishes, Dennis.

**** Apparently Strategy I and Kursk are both on their way to me, although neither has put in an appearance yet. Only one person in England, as far as I can gather, has Strategy I, whose letter appears below. HOW COME THESE FELLOWS GET THE GAMES BEFORE THE AGENT, THEN??? Must be something I said..... dit ****

From Charles Appleby, 2 Hulcote, Towcester, Northants.

Dear Don,

My copy of Strategy I arrived yesterday (June 19th) - was this the first in the country? I doubt it.

Initial comments - fantastic board and counters. The capacity for eight players is something completely new in commercial games of this type, but the combat results tables show a disappointing lack of attrition - rather surprising, I think.

I like the idea of explaining the reasoning behind the rules, and there is certainly plenty of novelty and innovation in their content; e.g. draft, riots and plague!

Sincerely, Charles.

***** Charles enclosed an article he has written on GRUNT, the game in S&T 26. This will appear in ALBION 31, since space in this issue is now fully booked.

The comments on Strategy I are enough to make designers and players lick their lips; I confess that the idea of eight players fills me with awe - though this is just the thing for AHIGS regional meetings and gatherings of board gamers in general. djt ***

From Chris Harvey, 30 Gorway Road, Walsall, Staffs.

**** I should explain that I labelled the S&T Grunt as a game with a ridiculous title in a circular I sent out. At the time I had no idea of the context; Chris soon put me right, as you will see (perhaps others will learn too.....) djt ****

(To repeat) from Chris Harvey.

Dear Don,

I thought I'd join the discussions over what ALBION should be, partly because I think it's important, partly because I feel I have something to offer, but mainly because I'm extremely opinionated! Last month (issue 29) I noticed the first of a line of 'pure history' articles. Personally I don't want these; I subscribed because ALBION was about games. I want information, news, views and opinions (without sounding too much like a late-night TV show) on games. That includes play-testing, game reports and the like.

Now admittedly a great many people don't have the games discussed, but by using that argument I dare say you could make out a case for excluding Diplomacy.

History you can get anywhere (I used to work in a library) but game information, in the UK is very rare. Stick to that!

I don't agree with you about GRUNT - I like the name; however I think I see where we disagree. Acronyms - well - Good Reason but UNTrue. 'Grunt' is in fact a slang term which refers to the draftees in the Vietnam war, as in 'the poor grunts who do all the fighting'. I can see now that if you don't know the word it would be rather difficult to spot its aptness.

Cheers, Chris.

**** As usual, another view follows.....

djt ****

From Michael Nethercot, 20 Moray Close, Rise Park, Romford, Essex.

Dear Don,

ALBION 29 - a magnificent issue. Should be compulsory reading to wargamers! John Robertson really knows his subject - a first class effort.

I enclose a cutting from the Sunday Times. I think you may, as a fellow mathematician, be interested in John Conway's 'game'. How about an ALBION feature on the subject?

Cheers for now, Michael.

**** I, too, enjoyed John Robertson's article; however John would be the first to agree that historical articles should only represent a minor proportion of the contents of ALBION, whose avowed purpose is biased towards gaming. I hope we will see further articles from John on the same type of subject, but can promise those who aren't interested in history that they will be in a minority. For one thing, John's a pretty busy person.

Conway's 'game', which is aptly called LIFE, is mentioned in John McCallum's letters, which follow. Impossible to describe briefly, I will, in my normal cowardly fashion, evade the issue until another time. Keep your eyes open for further news.....

djt ****

From John McCallum, P.O. Box 52, Ralston, Alberta, Canada.

Dear Don,

I was away for two weeks, one at a conference and one for leave, and found a vast stack of mail here on return. In it, ALBION 27. An excellent issue. Of course, I was particularly interested in Postal Diplomacy To Date. I hope you will not take it amiss if I enter a few caveats on the

article. I judge, by the way, that you spent a good deal of time in rummaging through Don Miller's Diplomacy 'zine collection, during your visit last year.

1. You say I sent a large number of copies of one issue of BROB to those advertising in the General. Actually this was spread over a period of 8 or 9 months and quite a number of issues were involved. I went through two of the General's classified ad pages (not consecutive issues) and sent copies of BROB to all the names appearing.

2. Wells and TRILL. Wells has, over the years, produced a large number of magazines, mostly of 'personal miscellany' as you call it. His CADENZA was quite well known. Dick Schultz published a large number of zines of this type also - DETROIT IRON, DIE WIS, THE RIGGER DIGGER, to name just a few. Boardman also has produced many different zines, but they are nearly all politically orientated.

3. Scarborough is a suburb of Toronto. Derek Nelson was the centre of the group which played there. They are close enough to Youngstown, on the other side of Lake Ontario, for the two clubs to have made many trips to each other's territory.

4. There have been 7 editions of the rulebook to date, six if the British edition is not counted. Practically any side of many of the rule dispute questions can be supported by the text of one or other of these.

5. John Smythe does not, alas, stand at the head of the BROB rating list. This is one of the things which makes me think that the BROB listing leaves a lot to be desired although, strangely, it receives a lot more favourable comment from readers than does the Calhamer listing in SERENDIP.

6. The 'tradition' of naming Dippy zines after fictional countries was begun by GRAUSTARK, the first zine, and carried on by RURITANIA, the second, so it is a little odd to see these two omitted from your list.

7. BROB has found its fourth editor in Rod Walker. And LONELY MOUNTAIN has, unfortunately, ceased production. Undoubtedly you learned of these two events too late for the article.

8. Only three times in 8 years has GRAUSTARK published less frequently than fortnightly, once in '64 when John was at a conference, once in 68 when he was on holiday in California, and once a year ago when he moved. Frequently when the situation demanded, it has stepped up to weekly production.

9. sTab, alas, is no longer going strong. It really ceased two years ago, although there were two issues last summer.

10. As you surmise, Reinsel had the intention of publishing 100 issues of BIG BROTHER and then stopping. However the cut-off was not quite as sharp as you suggest. He published another magazine to complete the games in progress when the century mark was reached.

11. Since you include defunct zines like BIG BROTHER, it would have been nice if you could also have included Brannan's WILD 'N' WOOLY. It was the first zine to carry more than once game at a time. This and many other of its features have been widely copied. Next to GRAUSTARK I think that WnW was the most influential zine in establishing the format that we have now.

12. ALBION the first outside the USA? How about mine, and also JUTLAND JOLLIES and NEMEDIAN CHRONICLES? All published in Canada. First outside the North American continent!

Do you read the Scientific American? There has recently been a series of articles in the Mathematical Games section on the game of 'Life' invented by Prof. Conway (Gonville and Caius, Cantab.). I have been fooling around with these things and, if nothing else, it provides one with a new method of doodling!

One thing you ask is if there was a prominent author associated with postal Diplomacy. Not prominent. You are undoubtably referring to Ted Johnstone/ Dave McDaniel. Don't ask me which name is the legal one and which the alias, since he used both. He played in 1963A and was wiped out in it making use of a computer programme to decide on his moves. He then edited RURITANIA from September 1963 until the end of 1964 when Boardman took it over. He dropped out of Diplomacy then but has recently entered a game of Miller's. He has written a number of stories, including several of the 'Man From Uncle' series.

Rating lists are, for some reason, popular among the readers. It would be idiotic to take them too seriously, but most sports and similar activities do have some sort of ranking scheme, and there seems no good reason why postal Diplomacy shouldn't do the same.

sLab was, in some ways, rather like ALBION - even tempered, a bit of humour, the game being given sufficient but not excessive prominence, and the editor's personality showing through.

Best regards, John.

**** My thanks to John for the interesting amendments he raises concerning the History of Postal Diplomacy article.

Another mention of the 'Life' game really demands that I do some explanation soon, although I confess that the enormity of the task tempts me to shirk it. Maybe in this issue, if there is space.

Actually, when I asked about a prominent author, I was thinking of a science fiction author, but couldn't at the time remember the name. Now it comes back to me. Isn't the name Zelazny? Ring a bell, anyone? djt ****

From Bernie Ackerman, P.O.Box 2545, Pretoria, Transvaal, South Africa.

Dear Don,

I feel a good deal of sympathy with Stuart Clark. To put my oar in: I would like to see more Diplomacy articles, not more rule interpretations, but how-to-play stuff. There must be wads of such material in other publications - any chance of tracking them down? Maybe your readers can contribute original articles?

All this is not to say that I'm dissatisfied with ALBION, since I am a war-gamer as well as a Diplomacy player. Just a point of interest.

Regards, Bernie.

**** In the face of the expertise that appears in American Diplomacy magazines, in articles on strategy, tactics and general Diplomacy subterfuge, I think many of the ALBION readers feel themselves to have insufficient experience of the game to write articles on the play. I certainly feel this way. However such contributions are, of course, welcome, and I hope we will continue to devote at least some space to Diplomacy play. djt ****

From Dave Taylor, 171 Lodge Lane, Hyde, Cheshire.

Dear Don,

I noticed a couple of errors (only small) in John Robertson's article on the Adrianople scenario from TAC14. Valerian (whose chief claim to fame lies in the fact that he was the first Roman emperor to end his days in captivity, being captured in battle by Shapur I of Persia) was the father of Gallienius. Vespasian, the first Flavian emperor, ruled from A.D.69 to A.D.79.

About TRIREME. I think it is an interesting game. It is clearly developed from table-top battles, rather than board games (in fact I would imagine that the squared grid was only included so as to define the position of the ships during their moves, thus facilitating ramming calculations). In contrast with other rules for this period I was surprised to find that the ships were quite difficult to sink. However the rules do encourage the use of the ram rather than engaging in boarding actions.

Since movement is simultaneous, an important part of the game is concerned with guessing where your opponent will move his ships - do it right and you're well on the way to winning, do it wrong and you have to salvage what you can from the disaster. The morale rules are interesting - they certainly encourage you to concentrate on the enemy Admiral's ship.

My only complaint concerns the board; as it comes it is too lightweight, and really requires mounting to make a better base.

Cheers, Dave.

***** Dave first told me about TRIREME, before I knew it was available. Had he not been inundated with exams recently, we might have had a few games. Soon, I hope, and thanks for the comments. djt **

From Hartley Patterson, Finches, 7 Cambridge Road, Beaconsfield, Bucks.

Dear Don,

Arrived at Hamleys on Friday to discover that PanzerBlitz had sold out two days previously. If the ALBION reader who bought the last one will own up he can expect a bomb by the next post! Are Hamleys really the only people in England who import AH games? (Which raises a point - nowhere in ALBION has there been a word about how to obtain AH games - not even the American address).

Quote from Hamleys: "We won't order any more PanzerBlitz until the entire AH stock is low again". I suspect they ask for 50 assorted wargames rather than any particular ones.

Hartley.

***** Point taken, Hartley; later in this issue readers will find a list of AH game stockists, plus other information on getting the games.

At a guess, you should send your bomb to the AHKS Cornish contingent, Chris Hall and Pete Rogers; I know they made severe inroads on Hamley's stock fairly recently. Advice to Cornwall - refuse to accept mail post-marked Bucks. for a while.

Actually it's nice to know that the game is selling well, as it deserves to do, although I can't really understand the attitude Hamley's demonstrate in regard re-ordering. djt ****

HERE YOU ARE, CHESS PLAYERS!

THE ALBION INTERNATIONAL CHESS TOURNAMENT.

At the foot of this page you will find an entry form for the first ALBION postal chess tournament. Entry is open to all, for a modest fee.

The prize will be a beautiful inlaid chess board with a full set of pieces (the latter will probably be hand-made, providing the response is sufficient).

Entrants need not be ALBION subscribers or AHIKS members, although I expect the majority will fit into one or both of these categories.

Rules for the tournament.

1. The tournament fee will be 65p (Great Britain), \$1.50 (U.S.), or equivalent in other currencies. The tournament fee must be paid on registering an entry.
2. Entries should be sent either to the editor or to Richard Redd, 16 Rechov Megadim, Yafeh Nof, Jerusalem, Israel, who is the Tournament Director. Closing date for entries will be October 1st 1971. Any credit with ALBION may be used for the entry fee.
3. The tournament will take the form of a knock-out competition, the draw to be made by the Tournament Director.
4. Standard chess move notation will be used (e.g. P-K4).
5. No time-limit is set on the frequency of moves. However, in the interests of brevity, players should attempt to send a move within 2 days of receiving a move from the opponent.
6. Each pair of players should arrange to send reports on the game to the Director at regular intervals (we suggest each 10 moves). Progress of the games will be reported in ALBION from time to time.

* * *

ALBION INTERNATIONAL CHESS TOURNAMENT.

Please enter me for the tournament; I enclose the entrance fee, and agree to abide by the rules of the tournament. Fee enclosed / please take from credit.

Name:

BLOCK

Address:

CAPITALS

PLEASE:

To: either Don Turnbull, 6 St. George's Avenue, Timperley, Cheshire, U.K.
or Richard Redd, 16 Rechov Megadim, Yafeh Nof, Jerusalem, Israel.

Closing date October 1st 1971.

The Chess Tournament.

My thanks to Richard for organising the tournament and for the offer of the prize. Richard will also be writing some articles on chess for ALBION in the future - either concerning the tournament itself or general in nature. I hope the response is sufficient to get the tournament going - please spread the word around your chess-playing friends. The more entries, the more can be spent on the prize, or maybe we can offer a second prize as well.

* * * * *

Diplomacy Stockists List.

My thanks to Jack Hartley and Dave Taylor for the additions to the list of stores etc. which stock the game Diplomacy.

Hewitts Ltd., 25-29 King Street, Knutsford, Cheshire.

Precision Models Ltd., Bold Street, Liverpool 1.

Timothy Whites, Middlesbrough (and presumably other branches).

T.& G. Allen Ltd., 18 Blackett Street, Newcastle on Tyne 1.

Carter's Sports Shop, 15 Bridge Street, Bradford 1, Yorks.

Kennedy's Toyshop, 109 Vicar Lane, Leeds 1, Yorks.

The Model Shop, Bootle Street, Manchester.

I should add a little note here. My wife comes from Bradford, Yorkshire (I am a Lancastrian, which leads to domestic friction from time to time, particularly when Lancashire beat Yorkshire hollow at cricket); at one time or another I have crossed the frontier into Yorkshire with Margaret. Whatever Yorkshire lacks, however, it certainly isn't a marvellous sports/hobbies shop. Carters of Bradford is probably the most magnificent shop of this nature I have seen in England (including anything London can offer). If you ever stray into Bradford, a visit to Carters is a must. Be sure to keep a tight hold on your cheque-book; the safest way is to leave it at home, since bankruptcy comes easily in Carters. Truly a magnificent place!

AVALON HILL GAMES - SOURCES.

Hartley Patterson points out in his letter that at no time have I announced in ALBION places where Avalon Hill games can be bought. Considering the fact that the magazine is aimed at players of games of the Avalon Hill type, at least in part, it is a fair comment on my intelligence that I hadn't thought of printing such a list in the past. Thanks to Hartley for pointing out the deficiency.

Here is a list of the stockists known to me. I haven't got up-to-date information on pricee or stocks, I'm afraid; however a few comments about normal etocks, delivery etc. will be added where appropriate.

1. Hamleys, Regent Street, London. Hamleys order batches of mixed AH games about twice a year, stocks arriving in March and November, as I recall. Prices tend to be in the region of £5 per game, depending on the title (I would expect PanzerBlitz to be slightly dearer). At one time they delivered by mail; however AH games weren't mentioned in their last Christmas catalogue. People in their thousands handle the goods on Hamleye's shelves - select with care!
2. General Trading Company, Sloane Street, Sloane Square, London. GTC order at about the same frequency as Hamleys, and their prices are much the same. The shop is in fact a supplier of fancy goods of superb quality - you can be sure to get a magnificent present for your wife (or whatever turns you on) at GTC. AH games occupy a small corner of this lavish store; hence fewer people handle the games, and the quality tends to be as high as you could expect. GTC also supply the games by mail, packing them as though they were made of fine Venetian glassware, and sending them promptly on receipt of the order. David Part, the managing director, has an interest in wargames, and orders addressed to him will receive prompt attention.
3. Cranwell House Developments, 102 High Street, Ingateetone, Eseex. CHD carry a small stock of selected AH gamee. Waterloo ie sold out, according to letest information; as I recall, stock includes Anzio, Blitzkrieg, Midway, Afrika Korps and Kriegspiel. The cheaper titles cost £4.75, the more expensive £5.50. (Anzio and Kriegspiel and Blitz are the latter). CHD operate almost entirely by mail, pack the games well and deliver very promptly. Their prices are a few shllinge lower than Hamleys or GTC.
4. Me. (?) In a few weeks I will have eabout four copies of PanzerBlitz for sale. No idea of the price (what's beer cost nowadays, anyway?). Certainly I won't be undercutting the CHD prices, but I expect to operate marginally cheaper than Hamleye. This is etrictly a one-off effort - I don't normally sell AH games, nor do I intend to make a habit of it.
5. H.H.Bodenstedt, Continental Hobbies, P.O.Box 116, Adelphia, New Jersey 07710, U.S.A. Henry sells all AH titles, end always carries a good stock. Clearly he eells at the American prices, although you have to add something for shipment (not much by sea, but seven weeks delivery; quite expeneive, but very quick, by air); sea mail prices will be lower than those quoted above, but you may be liable for import duty. Henry allows AHIKS members a emall discount, and you can make arrangements to pay his

agent in London, which simplifies this aspect.
Henry is an experienced wargamer, and an interesting person with whom to correspond.

6. The Avalon Hill Company, 4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, Maryland 21214, U.S.A. Strangely enough, not the best place to buy AH products. For a start, they don't encourage direct dealing; also they take quite a long time to acknowledge and send an order.
However AH is the only place you can get spare parts - unit counter sheets, etc.

For Strategy and Tactics Test Series Games etc., you should contact the Poultron Press U.K.agency, 6 St. George's Avenue, Timperley, Cheshire.

* * * * *

A New Idea For Postal Diplomacy.

A few weeks ago I had a circular from Colin Hemming, 20 Hilltop Court, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield, Manchester 14 (please note Colin's new address, those who saw the old one on the broadsheet). This announces the formation of (I think) a completely new type of postal Diplomacy game. I will leave the description to Colin.

'The only real difference between the proposed game and normal Diplomacy is that each player is able to see who occupies only those provinces which adjoin the ones he himself occupies. Got it? This seems to me not only more realistic (not too many aeroplanes were available for survey in 1900) but a great deal more fun to play. As I see it, the only way anyone can hope to win this game is to build an efficient spy network, and for this reason longer-than-usual diplomacy periods (a month?) will be needed.'

'Drawbacks? Well, first of all you need an incorruptible gamesmaster. Secondly, for obvious reasons, it won't be much of a game for spectators.'

'If you are interested, please write to me; I only propose to start one game initially, to see how many difficulties crop up, so if I'm swamped with replies I'll have to use either favouritism or a pin to choose the seven lucky people to pay (50p?) each to cover the cost.'

'Any suggestions for the name of this game?'

Colin Hemming.

**** This sounds a fascinating idea. I hope Colin gets the support to start the game. The amazing thing to me is that this is the first time this variant has been suggested, despite the fact that many many variants have been proposed and played in America for the last decade.

If I guess right, the game will look strange even when finally reported, since quite a lot of the back-stabbing will consist either of withdrawing support (as usual) or in pretending you have a unit in one place when it in fact is elsewhere(most unusual!) The final report will no doubt be full of apparently crazy moves, yet who can blame the players in the circumstances.

Altogether a really clever idea, and one which I hope will get started. Best of luck to Colin. djt ****

ALBION Trades and Subscribers List - Amendments etc.

The last complete list appeared in ALBION 26, and was amended in issues 27, 28 and 29. Next time I think we will re-print the complete list, mainly so that you all can keep track of the amount of cash you have in credit (if any.....) In the meantime, please make the following additions/corrections etc. to the list.

10. Dick Holcombe, 233 Orange Street, Oakland, California 94610, U.S.A.
Former subscriber. Now in debit to the tune of \$7.53, Dick has ignored persistent letters from me asking him to put the matter to rights. Removed from lists. Number to be re-allocated.
If anyone in the California area can bring pressure to bear for settlement of the debt, I will be grateful.
11. Bob Johnson, P.O.Box 134, Whippany, New Jersey 07981, U.S.A.
Former subscriber. Now in debit to the tune of \$11.91. Bob has also ignored my requests. Removed from lists. The above debit has been transferred to AHKS, and Bob has been asked to pay this sum to the AHKS treasurer, Dieter Cordes. Number to be re-allocated.

I confess my tremendous disappointment at the above announcements. Thank goodness most people have the courtesy to inform me when they wish to terminate their subscription - this saves me cash in sending them copies which they clearly don't intend to pay for. I hate printing such announcements, and hope it won't again be necessary.

38. Henry Radice (Lt. Col., M.B.E.). Please note change of address to Naseby House, 33 Cromwell Street, Gloucester.
43. Jim Boskey. Please note change of address to 19 Colony Drive East, West Orange, New Jersey 07052, U.S.A.
82. V.R.Parton, Hatherton House, North Mossley Hill Road, Liverpool 18.
S. (37).
83. Derek Fisher, 103 Belmont Road, Westgate on Sea, Kent.
S. (37).
84. David Miller, Flat 12, St. John's Court, Wakefield, Yorkshire.
S. (£1.68½).
85. Colin Hemming, 20 Hilltop Court, Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield, Manchester 14. S. (90).
86. Andrew Davidson, 20 Weygates Drive, Hale Barns, Altrincham, Cheshire.
S. (£1.05½).
87. Tom Oleson, Apt. 12, Bldg. D, 2112 Brook St., Durham, North Carolina 27705, U.S.A. S. (?).
88. Dennis Brackman, 920/22 Doris Street, N. Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. S (soon P). (?)

Yes! ALBION has finally penetrated Australia. Yet another continent falls prey to the grasping avaricious miserly ALBION coffers. A new country means that the seven-country game can get started, as announced on the next page.

The new subscribers are cordially welcomed - thanks for your confidence!

TWO NEW DIPLOMACY GAMES IN COURIER.

I have booked places in two new Diplomacy games for fourteen players; the games lists appear in COURIER 29B, which you should get with this ALBION if you haven't already got a copy.

It is particularly pleasurable to be able to announce the formation of the seven-country game, a long-standing ambition of the editor. The final hurdle - the confirmation by players of their places - will, we hope, be overcome soon and the game under way.

The Games Waiting Lists have taken something of a beating, and the revised versions now look like this:-

UK regular games: Howell Davies, Andrew Davidson.

International regular games: Jim Boskey, Buddy Tretick, Ian Livingstone, Dave Taylor, Michael Quist.

International Abstraction games: Bernie Ackerman, Michael Quist.

Further additions to these lists would be welcome, particularly for international regular games.

STOP PRESS: Dave Taylor has decided to forego his place in the new game 71/7, playing England. His place will be taken by Howell Davies, who can be removed from the waiting list above in consequence.

Game Fees.

Some game fees are still owing, as follows:-

71/5 - one game fee owing.

71/6 - one game fee owing.

71/1V - one game fee owing.

The players concerned above have had the game fee extracted from their credit in ALBION. In cases where this procedure puts them quite a lot in the red, they will find a short statement enclosed with this issue.

I would like to acknowledge receipt of two game fees for 71/7, already in; many thanks for the prompt replies, folks.

* * * * *

The ALBION HELP! Column.

FOR SALE. Mint condition AH Anzio. Price £3.

M. J. Freeman, 38 Sandford Road, Weston Super Mare, Somerset.

Harald Sonesson, Sturevagen 8, S-182 87 Stocksund, Sweden. Harald is touring the south of England in July/August and would be pleased to meet Diplomacy players and wargamers. Please contact Harald if you are interested in making arrangements.

Tips for gamers, from Charles Appleby. Homemade counters, and those to be cut from unit counter sheets (like the Test Series Games or those included in issues of S&T). Cover the sheets with clear Fablon before cutting out. This gives a professional finish and lengthens the life of the counters. The Fablon is quite cheap (about 30p for $\frac{1}{2}$ square yard) unless you do a battalion-level Russian campaign game with thousands of counters.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS - report on issue 26.

The magazine is published by Poultron Press, 34 East 23rd Street, New York City, New York 10010, U.S.A., and sells for a cover price of \$2.50. In fact this doesn't mean all that much, since the magazine costs much less as part of a six-issue subscription, and quite a lot more as a back issue. The UK agency for Poultron Press, 6 St. George's Avenue, Timperley, Cheshire, can advise on prices, subscription details etc.

The format is normal - 32 pages plus inserts. The presentation is of the normal high quality.

The issue is dated March-April 1971, and hence was published nearer to time than many previous issues. Apparently Poultron Press are reasonably near normal publication schedule now, which means that issue 27 should be on its way.

As usual, we take the articles in batting order.

1. Outgoing Mail - the S&T Editorial. Mainly on the S&T operations, and on articles and their reader ratings. We are glad to note that Sid Sackson's Games column is to be retained, despite its relatively low reader ratings. However the position in regard Rod Walker's Diplomacy column is far from clear; it seems possible that this might be dropped in the future on the grounds that most people don't find it interesting. We would regard this as a pity, but the S&T people are running the show and should know best.
2. American Forces in VIETNAM, by John Kramer. This is one of the most interesting articles I have seen in S&T for quite some time. Not only is it well written, amply illustrated etc., but also it gives information 'from the horse's mouth' - Kramer served for a year in Vietnam; this has the effect of bringing the article to life and making it thoroughly interesting reading. Obviously the article was intended to complement the game GRUNT which appeared in the issue (more about this later); to save my blushes, I wish Kramer had told me what a Grunt was in the article.....
3. The Waffen SS, by Steve Patrick. An organisational/historical article, neatly written and well illustrated.
4. Campaign Analysis - Part 4; the Sea War, by Al Nofi. A further article in the series on the North African campaign. Mainly a factual article, with excellent illustrations of various ship types. I imagine some might take exception to some of Al's statements about the Royal Navy (for instance, the R.N. apparently mounted naval operations in the Med. for little reason other than to tell everyone that Britannia still ruled the waves). However this is a personal matter, and I expect anyone sufficiently interested (or incensed) will write to Al about it.
5. Sackson on Games. I always like this column, even though many of the games reviewed are financially and geographically out of my reach, and some don't appeal to me anyway. However Sid produces interesting reports. I wish he would go a bit further sometimes and give us his verdict on the games - rarely does he comment on the actual play-value of a game, which, surely, should be the important part of such a column? This time the games concern lawsuits, riots and opinion polls - not really my cup of tea at all.

6. GAGE review of the AH Luftwaffe. This was quite a surprise. Luftwaffe was developed from the game Twelve O'Clock High, one of the S&T Test Series games, and therefore one would expect the S&T people to like the game. However they give it an overall rating of 4 (i.e. leaning slightly away from 'be sure to buy it' towards 'don't buy it'). The mystery is solved, at least partially, by reading that the game underwent quite a lot of refinement and revision before commercial publication; despite the fact that the rules were re-written, then re-written again by no less than the rules expert Omar DeWitt (who does the Avalon Hill rules interpretations), they still are not completely clear, according to the review. This is not adjudged the major drawback of the game, however. The reviewers (the Flanagans again) really crack down on the play mechanics, giving the overall playability a rating of only 4. The complete tournament version of the game takes about 40 hours to play (!!!) and the reviewers say, quite rightly, that most people just can't find this sort of time. So - rather disappointing news.
7. Pass in Review - the S&T book column. Not bad - I'm not sufficiently expert to comment. Incidentally, the Poultron Press U.K. agency won't be dealing with S&T books, at least at the moment; anyone interested in taking advantage of the S&T offers (they enclose a book list) should write direct.
8. Diplomacy by Rod Walker. Comments on diplomacy and strategy for each country in the game. An interesting article, if perhaps rather brief.
9. On the back page - an advertisement for the game Strategy I. With a photograph. What a game! I thought I had room to store quite a few more sets of game counters in my cabinet. However Strategy I has 1020 unit counters! Anyone got a cabinet for sale???
10. GRUNT. The game of tactical warfare in Vietnam, designed by John Kramer, with John Young and Red Simonsen. The game comes complete with rules (loose pages), mapsheet (suitable for mounting) and a complete (or rather near-complete; some parts of the game call for two 'radio' and two 'records' counters, only one of each being supplied) set of unit counters, which are die-cut and ready for play. This is the first time we have had die-cut counters from S&T, and very nice they are too. When opening the envelope containing your copy of S&T 26, be sure to keep the envelope until you have checked that all the counters are there; knocking about in the mail could push counters out of their mounting sheet, and they would then lurk in the recesses of the pages of the magazine or in the bottom of the envelope.

The Timperley Test Bed has played two games of GRUNT so far. Some of the rules are not very clear, and one or two omissions are apparent. However the difficulties are not by any means insuperable; we will be playing more games, using some (and eventually all) the optional rules, and will produce a report in ALBION 31. At first sight, the game is unusual and novel, containing some interesting and original features. With the optional rules, it is quite a complex piece of work, although the play mechanics appear quite palatable and not by any means unwieldy.

We would like to congratulate S&T on the die-cut unit counters. Previously, the only nuisance in preparing the games included in S&T for play was in cutting out unit counters from home-made sheets. We are pleased to see this nuisance eliminated, and hope they can continue to supply die-cut counters with future games.

Overall Comment on S&T 26.

This is a good issue, better in my opinion than many issues previously reviewed. Not that some articles are better than their counterparts in previous issues - the organisational articles etc. are uniformly good, although perhaps somewhat limited in appeal. The real benefits of issue 26 are in the Vietnam article and the GRUNT game. Value for money - this is a real bargain, even at the back issue price (where else could you get a complete game with die-cut counters for £1.50??).

Again, table-top wargamers are going to be rather disappointed at the lack of a specialist article. However all other readers should be well satisfied.

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P.S. The game in the next issue of S&T will be 1940: The Battle for France.

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DON MILLER REVIEWS ALBION.

Don Miller's magazine THE GAMESLETTER usually contains a review of ALBION, together with reviews on other magazines. The following reviews, which have been slightly abbreviated, appeared in issues 24 and 25 of volume 7 of the Gamesletter.

'ALBION issue 22. ALBION issue 23. These two issues somehow seem less lively than did the earlier issues. Although the Diplomacy games crowded the 'zine a bit, the "new" ALBION is just as cramped for space as ever with the AHKS Regional 'zine attached to it. Of course, the earlier issues were so good we're probably a bit spoiled; the new ALBION is every bit as good as most of the gaming 'zines we've seen --- and it will probably pick up as its prompt scheduling, witty editor, and good reader feedback generate more and more quality material. Give it a look, if you haven't already.'

'ALBION issue 24. ALBION issue 25. David Berg to the contrary, ALBION's arrival is always an eagerly-awaited event. In its former role as a Diplomacy 'zine, it was without peer. As a wargaming 'zine, it is topped by several other 'zines in both reproduction and content, but it is still the 'zine we enjoy the most. It is still having a bit of an identity problem, perhaps subconsciously wishing it were still a Diplomacy 'zine -- but give it time to develop in its new role, and it will be back up on top of the heap once again. The reproduction in the offset issue, surprisingly, was not as good as the mimeographed issues -- at least in our copy. And, Don, when's Prof. Erasmus and his Game Theory series going to appear again? We miss the old boy.....'

Apart from being an eminently sensible person, Don probably sees more gaming material and magazines than anyone else; his opinions are therefore most valuable and not lightly to be dismissed. Anyway, I think he is right on every count but one.

The one area of disagreement is in the role of ALBION, or perhaps the subconscious desires of ALBION. I can't pretend life is any easier, now that ALBION purports to be a general wargaming magazine; in many ways I look back with nostalgia to the days when I published what I liked, wrote what I liked, insulted everyone, and got some very funny press releases to print with the Diplomacy games. If I managed to produce 30 pages, OK; if only 10, then no-one objected all that much. Life was certainly a lot easier with the 'old' ALBION. However things have changed, and now the magazine is far more geared to the wants of the readership (as expressed in the letter

column from time to time) than to the selfish wants of the editor. Lucky for the readers, I say. Actually, re-reading what I have said, perhaps Don is right after all on this count as well; perhaps my nostalgia shows through. If so, then my apologies. You can be assured that the purpose of new ALBION - the supply of gaming information etc. - will remain.

Don's comments on the offset reproduction; you know the story of this, of course, and can be sure to get legible copies in future via the old faithful stencil. Clearly the mysteries of advanced printing technology are beyond my meagre capacity. Strange, though - like being able to out-pace an Alfa-Romeo on a tricycle. Which I do quite regularly, I assure you, despite the severe damage to the knees. But what are knees, after all?

Prof. Erasmus has been rather inactive lately, but was most flattered to be asked to return. In the past most people told him to get lost, when they told him anything. Maybe someday he will get over his fit of pique and continue the series. Perhaps I can get him to write something on the 'life' game, mentioned already in these pages.

My thanks to Don for his valuable comments. I hope the magazine lives up to his expectations for the future.

The back issue situation.

From now on I will be keeping all the stencils for every issue of ALBION and COURIER, which means that back issues will always be available on demand. Pity I didn't have the sense to think of it sooner; actually, I did, but my ~~housekeeper~~ wife complained about the fact that I wanted yet another room in the house. Most selfish.. these women.....

In the next ALBION.

Game reports on GRUNT by
and The Timperley Test Bed
Charles Appleby.

A new chess variant by Rod Blackshaw.

The 'Life' game - an account.

And more and more and more and more and more.....

Excuse me, please, while the editorial staff, typists, tea-girls, general duties office staff go out to celebrate the second birthday of ALBION. Wheeeeeeee!!!!

SOMEONE HATH BLUNDERED